

MAYOR OF LONDON

The Prime Minister

10 Downing Street
London SW1A 0AA

Date: 30 March 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

It is by coming together – as a country and a society – that we will best tackle the unprecedented challenge posed by COVID-19. The measures you have already put in place to support employers, workers and the self-employed will help many people through this crisis.

However, it is clear that more support is needed for those who are the most vulnerable to the economic impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, in particular those with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) and those on low incomes. That's why I am writing to make two specific asks that would ensure these groups do not fall through the net of provision we are all working to create and strengthen.

Across London, there are tens of thousands of residents with NRPF, including delivery drivers, cleaners and NHS staff. Sadly, as a result of this unprecedented crisis, we have already seen many lose their jobs.

Londoners with NRPF are at real risk of homelessness, have no way to access Universal Credit support when they lose their income, and their children are not eligible for support through free school meals. I am also particularly concerned about survivors of domestic violence with NRPF who will face additional challenges to fleeing abuse and seeking out support during this time. They are unable to access the welfare safety net they need, despite paying into the system through taxes. These are people who have lived in the UK for many years, often with children born and brought up here.

Whilst local authorities have received welcome additional support to deal with COVID-19, they are having to respond to a significant increase in demand for urgent help to avoid people going into destitution, which they simply do not have the capacity to accommodate or address.

The process for applying for removal of a NRPF condition can take up to six months. This has not been amended despite the national emergency we now face. I am therefore asking you to suspend the condition of NRPF. More than 30 human rights organisations, including Liberty and the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, have called for this. Doing so would not only enable people to get the support they need, but, crucially, would help to stop the spread of COVID-19 by those still who feel they have no choice but to go out to work.